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ABSTRACT

Adolescent pregnancy in the Hispanic community warrants attention both because it has been underresearched and because its consequences may be particularly dramatic. In addition to economic disadvantage, Hispanic adolescents in the United States must contend with conflicting messages from two cultures regarding standards of sexuality, timing of childbearing, and appropriate roles for women. While teenagers of all ethnic groups experience some contradictions between family and peer-group attitudes toward these issues, the contrasts are often especially pronounced for Hispanic girls, especially if they or their parents have been raised abroad. This report presents an overview of social, economic, and educational conditions among Hispanic Americans and examines the following factors relating to adolescent motherhood: (1) sexual activity; (2) pregnancy and abortion; (3) childbearing; (4) birth control; and (5) causes. The report urges that culturally sensitive preventive programs be designed for Hispanic youth and suggests the following steps: (1) identify the special local needs of Hispanic youth; (2) keep young Hispanics in school and help them work toward realistic educational and occupational goals; (3) improve parent-child communication on sex-related topics; and (4) improve family planning services and outreach to Hispanic youth. Statistical data is presented in 11 tables and graphs. A list of 52 reference notes is appended. (AF)

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